

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: PINT, HO
SUBJECT: NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL WAS CREATED IN 1976 BY THE GOVERNMENT TO SET UP AN ELECTORAL LAW FOR THE HOLDINGS OF ELECTIONS, PROBABLY IN 1979. IT DISCUSSED VARIOUS PROPOSED ELECTORAL LAWS DURING THE LATTER PART OF 1976 THAT WERE PRESENTED BY VARIOUS GROUPS REPRESENTED IN THE COUNCIL. THE COUNCIL STARTED CONSIDERATION OF A COMBINED DRAFT ON JANUARY 10, AND IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE NEW ELECTORAL LAW WILL BE PROMULAGATED WITHIN THE FIRST THREE MONTHS OF 1977. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL WAS ESTABLISHED AS A RESULT OF CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR'S PROPOSAL IN HIS 1975 END OF THE YEAR ADDRESS TO THE NATION. DURING THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF 1976, MELGAR AND HIS ADVISERS HELD A SERIES OF CONFERENCE WITH ALL SECTORS THAT COMPOSE THE HONDURAN SOCIETY. THE VARIOUS SECTORS (LABOR UNIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS, ETC.) WERE PERMITTED TO SELECT THREE DELEGATES EACH TO REPRESENT THEM IN THE COUNCIL. THE LIBERAL AND NATIONALIST PARTIES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR REFUSED TO JOIN BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THEY DESERVED A GREATER NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES; HOWEVER, THE INNOVATION AND

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UNITY PARY (PINU) AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) DID JOIN.

2. THE COUNCIL WAS INAUGURATED BY CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR ON JUNE 15 IN AN ELABORATE CEREMONY IN THE BUILDING THAT TRADITIONALLY HOUSES THE HONDURAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (SUSPENDED SINCE THE COUP OF DECEMBER 1972). MELGAR DESCRIBED THE

PRINCIPAL TASK OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL AS THAT OF PREPARING AN ELECTORAL LAW FOR THE HOLDING OF FREE ELECTIONS, PROBABLY IN 1979. IN ADDITION, HE SAID THAT THE COUNCIL COULD DISCUSS AND RECOMMEND MEASURES TO THE GOVERNMENT; HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT ITS FUNCTIONS WOULD BE SOLELY ADVISORY IN NATURE. HE NAMED LT. COL. CESAR ELVIR SIERRA, THEN CHIEF OF STAFF, AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL. IT APPEARS TO THE MISSION THAT ELVIR IS THE

BEST MAN FOR THE POSITION BECAUSE OF HIS INTELLIGENCE AND HIGH LEVEL OF COMPETENCE. HE IS ALSO PRO-U.S.

3. THE COUNCIL DISCUSSED VARIOUS DRAFT ELECTORAL LAWS PRESENTED BY SEVERAL GROUPS DURING THE LATTER PART OF 1976, AND STARTED CONSIDERATION OF A COMBINED DRAFT ON JANUARY 10. LT. COL. CESAR ELVIR SIERRA WAS PROMOTED TO COLONEL IN DECEMBER 1976 AND WAS REPLACED BY BRIG. GENERAL MARIO CHINCHILLA CARCAMO AS CHIEF OF STAFF IN THE JANUARY 5 MILITARY CHANGES. ELVIR WILL NOW DEVOTE HIS FULL TIME TO FULFILLING THE FUNCTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL.

4. THE INNOVATION AND UNITY PARTY WITHDREW FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE COUNCIL ON JANUARY 10, OSTENSIBLY BECAUSE THE COUNCIL LACKED POWER TO EFFECT NEEDED CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, PRIOR TO ITS DEPARTURE, THE PARTY REPRESENTATIVES PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT PART IN DRAFTING THE COMBINED ELECTORAL LAW PROPOSAL. THE REAL REASON IT WITHDREW IS BECAUSE THE PARTY LEADERSHIP FELT THE PARTY'S CHANCES IN THE COMING ELECTION WOULD BE DAMAGED IF IT CONTINUED TO BE REPRESENTED IN A GOVERNMENT-CREATED BODY WHICH HAD NOT BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ELECTED POPULARLY.

5. COMMENT. THE COUNCIL FACES A COMPLICATED TASK IN FINALLY APPROVING A DEFINITIVE ELECTORAL LAW. THE LAW MUST GUARANTEE THE RIGHT TO ALL PARTIES TO PARTICIPATE FULLY AND FREELY IN THE ELECTIONS; AT THE SAME TIME, THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL MUST BE SATISFIED WITH ITS PROVISIONS. HOWEVER, IT IS PROBABLE THAT THE LAW WILL BE COMPLETED AND APPROVED DURING THE FIRST PART OF 1977.
BECKER

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